



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 30, 2010

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Housing and Redevelopment Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Update On Strategies To Address Community Issues Related To Homelessness In The City Of Santa Barbara

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive an update on the twelve recommended strategies outlined in *Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness in the City of Santa Barbara*.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In February 2009, Council approved the *Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness in the City of Santa Barbara (Strategies)* and directed staff to implement the recommended strategies and return to the Council in 12 months with a status report. Each of the 12 recommended strategies, associated assessment protocol, and to-date progress made towards their implementation, are discussed in this report.

BACKGROUND:

On June 17, 2008, the City Council established a Council Subcommittee, made up of three Council members (Chair Iya Falcone, Dale Francisco and Helene Schneider), to study a range of issues related to homeless services and neighborhood impacts. This committee was charged with making recommendations to the full Council, with input from community members, on strategies to address five identified issues:

- 1) Need for increased coordination between City Police and homeless street outreach staff from various agencies to reduce calls for service to City Police;
- 2) Recommendation from the Milpas Action Task Force to consider establishing a Recovery Zone or Alcohol Impact Zone in the Lower Milpas Street area;
- 3) Aggressive panhandling, primarily in the Downtown area;
- 4) Gaining the support of the courts, District Attorney and County Probation to curb negative behavior (e.g., through injunctions and increased penalties) and requiring offenders to receive services/treatment to get on the track to recovery; and,
- 5) Utilization of existing shelter services to more effectively assist the most vulnerable homeless persons.

A total of nine community meetings were held from July 2008 to January 2009 to address the above issues. The subcommittee members gathered input from City staff, local businesses, homeless service providers, community members, and homeless persons on each of the topic areas. Two working task groups were formed to deal specifically with increased coordination of outreach workers and panhandling. These task groups met on three occasions and reported back to the subcommittee with their recommendations.

On February 24, 2009, Council approved the *Strategies* and directed staff to implement the recommended strategies and return to the Council in 12 months with a status report. City Council also authorized the Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations to reconvene to review and approve assessment protocol, which would define a process for measuring the effectiveness of the recommended strategies.

DISCUSSION:

The *Strategies* include 12 recommendations organized into three interrelated categories (enforcement, intervention, and prevention) and are intended to be implemented as a package. The assessment protocols define outcome measurements to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations. Each of the 12 recommended strategies, associated assessment protocol, and to-date progress made towards their implementation, are discussed below.

Recommendation #1: *Adoption of a City ordinance that is more restrictive on solicitation.*

In August 2009, Council amended SBMC Chapter 9.50 to prohibit "abusive panhandling" (e.g., blocking, following, threatening, and/or touching the person being panhandled) entirely within the City, with the provision that the effective date of the ordinance be delayed until the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign was established. The amended ordinance also prohibits "active panhandling" while on a public bench or other public seating area in the 400-1200 blocks of State Street, lower Milpas Street, or Cabrillo Boulevard between Castillo Street and Milpas Street, and actively panhandling in areas where the person being panhandled is less able to move away, such as while waiting at a bus stop or sitting at an outdoor dining establishment. Passive panhandling (e.g., holding a sign without a verbal request) is allowed under this ordinance. With Redevelopment Agency Board approval of funding in November 2009 to support the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign, the aggressive panhandling ordinance went into effect on December 1, 2009.

Recommendation #2: *Continue and expand intergovernmental cooperation to curb negative behavior.*

The Police Department, City Attorney's Office and the courts have coordinated to prosecute chronic offenders of an open container and other Municipal Code violations, such as aggressive panhandling, as misdemeanors instead of infractions. Similarly, those same violations will be prosecuted as misdemeanors if they occur within certain areas of the City.

The officers assigned to the restorative policing unit have divided their attention between those persons who have significant mental health/homeless issues and those who have alcoholism/homeless issues. This bifurcated approach has lead to successes in assisting the worst chronic inebriates in seeking treatment. Working in cooperation with the City Attorney, District Attorney, Superior Court, County Jail Staff and Defense Attorneys, the officers have begun to better utilize incarceration time to advance detox efforts. Fostering those relationships with the homeless, the officers have arranged for and transported volunteer clients directly to area non-profit treatment centers.

Since June 2009, the officers have arranged for treatment for the five individuals who alone accounted for 311 separate arrests and 1,516 separate misdemeanor citations and a number of Emergency Room visits. Two of these individuals were on the Top Ten Offender List.

Recommendation #3: *Continue to utilize Police Department deployment strategies to best meet the immediate demands of the community.*

The Tactical Patrol Force officers routinely patrol the downtown corridor and the Main Library, the Waterfront area, lower Milpas Street, and the labor line. In Fiscal Year 2010, a retired part-time patrol officer was hired to patrol State Street. That part-time position is funded by the City's Downtown Parking Division and the Downtown Organization.

Recommendation #4: *Implement principles of a Recovery Zone for the Milpas Area to the extent legally permissible.*

In April 2009, City Police protested an enhanced liquor license application for the store at 134 S. Milpas Street, which would have allowed them to sell hard liquor. The applicant eventually withdrew their application and was told by ABC that they would need to gain the support of the community if they wanted the license upgrade.

Based on the Subcommittee's recommendation, the City Council's Legislative Platform will be revised to express the City's support for state legislation to allow cities and counties to designate "Alcohol Impacted Areas" and to impose strict local review and controls on the issuance of new ABC permits within such areas.

As mentioned in #2, the Police Department and the City Attorney's office have coordinated to prosecute chronic offenders of an open container and other Municipal Code violations, such as open container violations, as misdemeanors instead of infractions.

Recommendation #5: *Encourage coordination and cooperation of street outreach teams and the Police Department to work with those on the Top 100 open container offender list.*

City Police and homeless street outreach workers have met regularly since June 2009 under the coordination of the Santa Barbara County-wide 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. They have collaborated on issues such as camp cleanups, release of information forms for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requirements, emergency parking issues and jail discharge planning. City Police now notify street outreach workers once a 72-hour clean-up notice has been

posted, which allows the outreach workers time to work with people involved to offer them shelter/housing and ensure that important documents and possessions are not lost.

The group has begun to meet twice a month to coordinate in helping those most in need and costly to the system (jail, hospital, etc.). Instead of focusing exclusively on the Top 100 offender list, they have decided to focus their collaborative efforts to assist any homeless individual by having the outreach workers; police and discharge planner develop a coordinated case management plan, including who might best serve as the lead for each case. In addition, they are setting up a system of care for homeless people being released from jail.

Recommendation #6: *If shelter service providers wish to amend conditional use permits to allow for an increase in their year round beds for vulnerable populations (e.g. women with children, elderly, youth aging out of the foster care system, persons with medical conditions and persons on the Top 100 offender list who are ready to get off the street and into recovery), work with them and their neighbors in the amendment process to assess the potential impact on the neighborhood and identify mitigation strategies.*

On March 26, 2009, the Planning Commission approved amendments to Casa Esperanza's Conditional Use Permit to temporarily increase the year-round shelter by 40 beds (for a total of 140 beds) from April 1, 2009 through June 30, 2009, to house vulnerable populations. The Commission also allowed Casa Esperanza, with the approval of the Police Chief, the ability to increase the number of beds (up to 10%), when warranted and at the request of the Police, in order to respond to critical weather or public safety needs.

Recommendation #7: *Consider using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Redevelopment Agency funds for capital improvements in the lower Milpas Street area to mitigate the impact of homelessness.*

The Community Development and Human Services Committee recommended allocating \$25,000 of the City's Fiscal Year 2011 CDBG funds to construct a six-foot high chain link fence around the bleachers and restrooms at the Cabrillo Ball Field to discourage illegal camping, drug activity and loitering. The City's Capital Improvement Program anticipates construction of pedestrian lighting and sidewalk infill on lower Milpas Street in Fiscal Year 2014, following completion of the U.S. Highway 101 improvements. This improvement project is not yet funded, but may be considered as a future Redevelopment Agency project.

Recommendation #8: *The significant need for additional detox beds is recognized and staff is directed to work with relevant agencies to help them with securing locations and funding for more detox beds and recovery beds for homeless individuals with substance abuse issues.*

The Project Recovery Detox Program, operated by the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA) at Casa Esperanza, has 12 beds for their 14-day residential detox program. Due to demand, since December 1, 2009, both dorms (six beds each) have been used for men; women needing detox are being sent to North County through a collaboration of County Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services, Casa Esperanza, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA), Good Samaritan Shelter, and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE).

A working subcommittee of the South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee was formed to develop a plan to move the detox program from its current location at Casa Esperanza and expand the number of available beds.

The Community Development and Human Services Committee recommended allocating \$20,000 of the City's Fiscal Year 2011 Human Services funds to CADA to support their detox program and \$15,000 to Casa Serena to support their recovery program for women.

Recommendation #9: Continue and expand the Restorative Policing Program to work with homeless persons with mental illness.

Although the number of restorative police officers has not expanded since February 2009, Tactical Patrol Force officers are trained in the restorative policing process. In February 2010, the Police Department hosted a Crisis Intervention class for police City officers and surrounding organizations.

Recommendation #10: Work with service providers to secure funding for relocation funds and emergency hotel vouchers and programs to help reconnect people with their families.

In June 2009, Council approved a \$45,000 grant to Transition House for a pilot project to fund a Hotel Voucher Project (HVP) to provide safe accommodations for homeless families with children who wish to enter Transition House and participate in services but are denied entrance due lack of bed space. At the same time, due to the increased need for shelter, Transition House began a waiting list and offered those on the waiting list case management services and/or referrals as needed.

Since July 2009, 161 families have been placed on Transition House's waiting list, 79% from the City of Santa Barbara and 90% from the County of Santa Barbara. Of the 161 families, only 8 needed to utilize hotel vouchers. Many families were able to find ways to stay off the street thanks to the waiting list. People found that they were often able to stay with a friend or continue on for a few days or more in their apartment because they have a plan—the landlord, the friend, or the family member was more willing to keep them on a little longer knowing that they would soon leave to join Transition House.

All eight families served by the HVP were very low income; three were single females (one was disabled, two were elderly) and one was a couple in their early 60s. The remaining households were single mothers. All eight households entered housing after using the HVP. Prior to contacting Transition house, six of the eight clients were living in apartments; one was staying at Casa Esperanza, and one was living on the street.

Recommendation #11: *Develop a panhandling and alternate giving campaign in collaboration with the Downtown Organization, the Conference and Visitors Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Santa Barbara Lodging and Restaurant Association, homeless service providers, the faith-based community and homeless advocates.*

In November 2009, the Redevelopment Agency Board allocated \$75,000 for the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign (Campaign). The Downtown Organization is implementing the Campaign and managing Surfmedia's contract to provide branding, messaging, and media relations services. The Campaign is currently being developed and is expected to launch in April 2010. The Campaign's focus to date has been to educate residents and visitors about the negative cycle of giving to panhandlers, and urging them to seek alternative forms of giving that facilitate real, positive change for very low-income individuals. As part of the launch, businesses in the Campaign area are being encouraged to host countertop change receptacles provided by the Campaign. All donations collected will go directly to street outreach. Beginning in summer 2010, the implementation team will focus on developing additional mechanisms for the community to give donations in an alternative manner, specifically a street-side donation box, with the goal of launching that component of the campaign in January 2011.

Recommendation #12: *Continue looking for opportunities to assist with affordable housing projects, especially those involving permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals.*

The City is assisting three affordable housing projects that include units for permanent supportive housing for homeless persons. The Housing Authority is currently constructing Artisan Court (416–424 East Cota Street), a below market-rate rental development comprised of 56 studio units serving a mixed population of special needs individuals, homeless youth aging out of foster care, and low-income downtown workers. Construction is expected to be complete in December 2010. The Housing Authority is also developing plans to build a below market-rate development at 512 Bath Street (also known as the Bradley property) with a mix of approximately 54 studio and one-bedroom apartment units, largely serving special needs populations, including chronic homeless, with wrap-around services.

Transition House has plans to construct a new two-story mixed-use building at 421 East Cota Street that will include eight new apartments for client families who have been in their shelter/transitional housing programs and a 2,000 square foot infant care center. The units will be targeted exclusively to low and very-low income households.

Assessment Protocol

The subcommittee recognized that homelessness is a complex social problem that cannot be solved by the City of Santa Barbara alone. The state of the current economy, California's state budget crisis and Santa Barbara County's Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services budget crisis all affect the most vulnerable persons in our community and the agencies and programs that respond to their needs. The 12 recommendations that were approved by Council were intended to provide concrete strategies to address specific issues in the City.

The Council Subcommittee met on June 11, 2009, to discuss appropriate assessment protocol for three of the 12 Strategies. They decided, with public input, that the following measurements should be tracked to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations.

Recommendation #2: Intergovernmental Cooperation

- 694 Citations issued in all 6 Enforcement Zones
- Ten individuals accounted for 33% of all Zone citations issued.
- Three Aggressive Panhandling Citations were issued since the ordinance was approved.
- ABC Licenses Denied in Recovery Zone
 - New licenses - None
 - Enhanced licenses - One denied
- ABC Licenses Approved in Recovery Zone
 - New licenses- None
 - Enhanced licenses - None
- Drug Arrests – 18 drug sales arrests were made in reporting districts associated with the Recovery Zone
- "Stay Away" Orders – No orders were made due to them being legally difficult to defend.
- "Stay Away" Order Violations - None

Recommendation #5: Street Outreach Coordination

- 1,877 Street Outreach Contacts
 - 168 People Entering Shelter or Housing
- 134 Jail Inmate Discharge Planner Contacts
 - 10 from Chronic Offender List
 - 63% from City of Santa Barbara

Recommendation #10: Hotel Voucher Pilot Project

- Hotel Vouchers Given
 - # Given = 8 (23 total nights)
 - # of Families Served = 8 (14 total people)
 - # of times Family Served = 1 time each household
- Demographics
 - Race = 2 households African-American and 6 households Caucasian
 - Income Level = 8 households very low-income
 - Sex = Unknown
 - Prior Address = Unknown
 - Prior Living Situation = 6 from apartments; 1 from Casa Esperanza; 1 from street
- Outcome
 - Entered Program = 8
 - Left Town
 - Found Housing = 8 households
 - Other

CONCLUSION:

Much has been accomplished in the past year and early indications show increased cooperation between the stakeholders, including the Police Department, street outreach workers, the Court, businesses, providers and faith-based organizations. City staff will continue to collaborate with participating organizations in implementing and assessing these important strategies.

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